

## Notes for teachers running the *Team Game Tournament*

The idea for this activity is that you are almost completely hands off. The children teach each other through the practice session and this is where the bulk of the learning occurs. By setting the process up as a competition the teams tend to gel a lot better, particularly when you explain that everybody has the same opportunity to contribute points to the team's overall score.

### *How it works – the practice session*

Make sure you have sufficient time to run the activity. For a class that has not done anything like this before, you're going to need about an hour. I'm not sure it would be possible to run the activity in less than 45-50 minutes.

Divide the class into team groups of relatively even ability. This is a good opportunity to mix and integrate students who don't normally work together. Five groups of five would be great. Four groups of seven though is much better than seven groups of four when it comes to the tournament section at the end of the class. Ideally you want the same number of children in each of the groups, but class sizes of 22, 23, 26 29 and 31 can all be relatively easily accommodated. Close enough is near enough. Have each team gather around desks in a different part of the room.

Explain to the children that they are going to work with the members of their team to complete some learning and – I don't have any qualms about this – win a prize. Usually I offer a bag of confectionary to be shared among the winning team members, enough to make it a prize worth winning, but not enough so that those who don't win are particularly upset about losing. It's the competitive 'we won' goal I look for, not an obsession with the prize. To date I have run Team Game Tournaments on a number of occasions and the prize, while gratefully accepted, has never been the motivating factor. (That said, I do hold up the prize at the start so that they know that they actually is going to be one, not some 'teacher promise' of a prize).

Explain that you will be handing out to them a list of questions that as a team they not only have to find the answers to but also ensure that everyone in their team *understands* those answers, because at the end of the time as a team they will *all* be competing and everyone's scores will count. Tell them that they have a set amount of time to complete the questions (give them that time – probably about 25-30 minutes, but you'll know your children's needs and abilities). Explain that you will **not** be giving them the answers at the end of the time, nor will you just be giving out the answers as you wander around the room. Hand out the practice session question sheets and the resource sheets. Ask if they have any questions, and then set them to the task.

They should settle into the task quite quickly. Circulate around the room, checking with how teams are going, but try to resist intervening in their activity. Assist with comprehension of the question, but at this level they should have little problem working out the answers. The important thing is that you iterate and reiterate that *everyone* in the team needs to understand the group's answers. The brightest children will have the practice session questions sorted out relatively quickly. They need to help the others in their group understand the group's answers, and this is different from simply *telling* them the answers. Try to keep the time pressure on the groups right through ("*you've only got fifteen minutes left!*") My experience has been that the groups enjoy feeling under time pressure in this activity.

At the end of the practice session (and you can give them a five minute warning about this) each group needs to rank its members in terms of how well they understand and know the answers to the questions.

Their most able member should be rank 1, the next most able, rank 2 and so on. They have to decide. It may not be the brightest children in the highest ranks: clearly a rugby fanatic is likely to rank higher than a very able child who is not normally interested in rugby.

As the practice session time comes to an end, again emphasize that all members of the group need to understand the answers to the questions, and that the group needs to get its ranking sorted out. Stop the groups from working at the set time. Be very assertive.

### ***How it works – the tournament session.***

It can be easier to begin by moving the groups around. Ask the rank 1s from all the groups to stand up – they are then moved to a space by themselves, then the rank twos and so on. Eventually rather than the original groups sitting together, the class will be re-mixed in ranked groups, ready for the next part of the tournament. Sometimes a group will try to skew its rank. It is theoretically possible for this to work, but I've not yet seen a team pull it off successfully in a way that gave them a distinct advantage. I always urge my classes to rank honestly as this gives them the best chance to do well. The group ethic of the teams will generally make everyone rank honestly.

Be very direct in your instructions. Explain that this is a tournament and like any competition any attempt to cheat will result in disqualification – but that the individuals won't know they've been disqualified until the end. (This is important!) Explain that from the time you say, it will be total silence and test conditions until you release them. Any talking or attempt to communicate will result in disqualification. Explain that they will be given question sheets and that they will have only four minutes (you can make it five if you like, but you want to ensure that very few of the children complete the test – there's not much learning in the test, that's already occurred during the practice session – the tournament is just the way to find out which team gets the prize. (The children however believe that the test is the most important part, so that works in your favour). Explain that at the end of the time test conditions will remain, and that on your instruction people will swap papers and you will give out the answers. People will receive points for their team based not on their raw scores, but on how well they fared against others in their rank group: thus a rank 2 person who got 13/18 but came third against the others in her rank group, will actually receive fewer points than a rank 5 person who only scored 4/18 but who did better than the other rank 5 competitors. The children like this, particularly the less able students.

Ask for questions then impose silence. Explain that they will write their answers directly on the tournament sheets. Tell them that they will have to work very fast, and that if they get stuck they should go on to the next question and come back if there's time left at the end. Hand out the tournament sheets to the lowest ranked group first and work upwards. Students can start the questions as soon as they get them. Start your clock as soon as you've handed out the last papers to the rank 1 group. Rigidly enforce silence. Be ready to disqualify. Keep the time pressure on (*three minutes left...two minutes!... one minute...thirty seconds... 10, 9, 8,...Everybody stop, pens down NOW.*) Again be ready to disqualify those who keep writing. Maintain test conditions. Get the children to swap answer sheets with others on their rank table. Tell them to mark the sheet in front of them as you read out the answers. Give them the answers. There shouldn't need to be any discussion – if anyone had a query, they can put their hand up. They then tally up the marks for the sheet in front of them and put this total in the raw score box on the page. Instruct them to work out the placing of the competitors of their rank (so they could be first, second, third, fourth etc. Equal placings are fine)

During the tournament you should have had time to draw up on the whiteboard or large sheet of paper a points/placings grid. How you manage this will depend on the numbers of students and groups you have. I

find it easier to have larger teams in the practice session so there are more ranks but fewer people in each rank group. You want to be easy enough to manage ties in scores. The only results that matter are where each child placed in their tournament rank group, not their raw score.

The table below gives a way of working out scores for each placing.

Number of students in rank group	Placings and <b>scores</b> from the tournament								
5	1 <sup>st</sup> <b>10</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> = <b>9</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> <b>8</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> = <b>7</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> <b>6</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> = <b>5</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> <b>4</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> = <b>3</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> <b>2</b>
4	1 <sup>st</sup> <b>8</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> = <b>7</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> <b>6</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> = <b>5</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> <b>4</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> = <b>3</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> <b>2</b>		
3	1 <sup>st</sup> <b>6</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> = <b>5</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> <b>4</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> = <b>3</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> <b>2</b>				
2	1 <sup>st</sup> <b>4</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> = <b>3</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> <b>2</b>						

If you end up with odd groups (eg there are 26 children in the class so you initially have two teams of six and two of seven) I tend to add an average to the other group. You can be more complicated if you like, but as long as you've got a good patter, most classes don't pick the slight unfairness of this arrangement.

I collect the *placings* from each rank group, starting from the rank 1s – this tends to bring the final result down to the lowest ranked members, which is great for them. This is also the time when anyone you've had to disqualify loses their points: they will only ever get themselves disqualified once!

The table below shows how a tournament might pan out for five teams of five.

	Scores gained by each team				
	Team A	Team B	Team C	Team D	Team E
Rank 1	3 <sup>rd</sup> = <b>5</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> <b>2</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> <b>4</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> <b>10</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> <b>8</b>
Rank 2	1 <sup>st</sup> <b>10</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> <b>2</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> <b>8</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> = <b>5</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> = <b>5</b>
Rank 3	4 <sup>th</sup> <b>4</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> <b>10</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> = <b>7</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> <b>2</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> = <b>7</b>
Rank 4	5 <sup>th</sup> <b>2</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> <b>8</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> <b>10</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> = <b>5</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> <b>4</b>
Rank 5	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>
Total	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>

You can see from the above table that it's any team's tournament until the last ranked players' scores are added. You can also see that a points disqualification for a team member is potentially lethal to the team's chances of overall success. It's really good in that the least able member of one of the groups gets to be a hero to his / her peers, which is often a rare experience for these more limited ability children. In the end no one minds too much because everyone has contributed to the team's success or failure. The prize gets handed out to the winning team, the class comes to an end, and they all go out fizzing, not realizing that along the way they've learned a fair bit too. I generally use *Team Game Tournaments* for revision activities, but they work just as well for introductory learning activities like this one.